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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 0746  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 0433  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 1449  
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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY 0931  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY 0844  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 2541  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2211

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASTANA 000478

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, S/SRAP, EUR/RUS, NEA/IR

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PROP](#) [MARR](#) [IR](#) [RS](#) [AF](#) [KZ](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: "MOSCOW WANTS YOU TO FAIL IN AFGHANISTAN"

REF: A. ASTANA 0426

[1](#)B. ASTANA 0376

Classified By: Ambassador Richard E. Hoagland: 1.4 (B), (D)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: A Kazakhstani foreign-policy insider told the Ambassador Moscow strongly objects to Kazakhstan playing any kind of military role in Afghanistan, but at the same time Astana is striving to balance its interests and find the best way to be helpful in Afghanistan. He said Kazakhstan has little real influence with Iran, but is encouraged the United States seems committed to real dialog with Tehran. He revealed Iran's President Ahmadinejad will visit Astana on April 6. END SUMMARY.

"MOSCOW WANTS YOU TO FAIL IN AFGHANISTAN"

[1](#)2. (C) At the March 16 reception in honor of the 10th anniversary of Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic's accession to NATO, Foreign Ministry Director for Asia and Africa Rustam Kurmanguzhin pulled aside the Ambassador for a long conversation. He said that Foreign Minister Marat Tazhin was currently in Moscow, both to consult with Russian authorities about possible roles Kazakhstan would like to play in Afghanistan and to urge Moscow to be constructive and not react reflexively against the United States. He emphasized that Tazhin was acting in Kazakhstan's best interests and was playing favorites for no one. When the Ambassador noted the coincidence of FM Tazhin in Moscow and Deputy Minister of Defense General Bulat Sembinov in Washington, Kurmanguzhin replied, "It's no coincidence. There are very strong forces in Moscow that want you to fail in Afghanistan, believing you will then lose interest in Central Asia. President Nazarbayev sent Tazhin to Moscow to keep all doors open."

[1](#)3. (C) Kurmanguzhin suggested it might, in the end, be impossible for Kazakhstan to send troops, even non-combatants, to Afghanistan to support the International Security Assistance Force (ref A), because of Moscow's vehement objection that it has already made perfectly clear to Astana, but there could be other opportunities for Kazakhstan to play a helpful role. He suggested the United States could, for example, offer to send relatively small

numbers of Afghans -- "less than hundreds, or else we will lose track of them" -- to Kazakhstan for specialized joint U.S.-Kazakhstani training. "Although the United States would have to pay for it, we are certain we could do that without 'special permission.'"

¶4. (C) The Ambassador emphasized to Kurmanguzhin that the United States has not yet finished its comprehensive policy reviews, but we clearly see Kazakhstan as a responsible international player in general, and an increasingly key player in the region, including for Afghanistan (ref B). We respect Kazakhstan's special relationships with its other partners, but at the same time we expect Kazakhstan to act in its own best national interests, to the fullest extent possible. Kurmanguzhin responded, "Believe me, we will do everything we can, but there are certain red lines from Moscow we cannot cross, and it could well be that our troops in Afghanistan is one of those red lines, although that is not yet a final decision. The question is still open, even if Moscow has made its views clear to us. Even so, 'the struggle continues,' and we want to find every possible way to be helpful."

AHMEDINEJAD TO VISIT ASTANA

¶5. (C) The Ambassador asked what Kazakhstan is thinking about Iran in the region, specifically in relation to Afghanistan. Kurmanguzhin replied he doubted Astana could have much influence with Tehran. He said, "We try to talk reason to them, but they toss their heads and ignore us." He recounted that President Nazarbayev had spent several hours

ASTANA 00000478 002 OF 002

talking sense to the "highest authorities" in Tehran, but came away feeling he had been "talking to a brick wall." Kurmanguzhin revealed President Ahmadinejad will visit Astana on April 6. He added, "We don't know the details about what you are doing, but we are encouraged that Washington seems serious about finding way to engage with Tehran. That is an essential first step to bring Tehran back into the family of responsible states. Russia can't do it because of its compromised interests. Only the United States can. Simply put, we probably can't do much; but, even so, we want to be helpful."

"IT IS NOW BETTER NOT TO BE FRIENDS WITH WASHINGTON"

¶6. (U) CONTEXT: The Russian mass media, which dominate Central Asia's information space, continue their campaign to limit U.S. influence in Central Asia. On March 13, RIA Novosti posted an article by Dmitry Kosyrev headlined, "Will Obama Repeat Bush's Mistakes in Central Asia?" Although attempting to be even-handed, Kosyrev perpetuates Moscow's standard black propaganda: "...The Bush administration sincerely believed that 'spreading democracy' to Afghanistan would win the war, that this was the true objective and method of waging the war. This turned potential allies into enemies, because the Central Asian states think the U.S. started the Afghan war to change the regional regimes into local analogues of Georgia's Saakashvili and Ukraine's Yushchenko, and that it began with Afghan President Hamid Karzai. Iran, China and Russia think the war could be Washington's attempt to reduce their influence in Central Asia to zero.... (T)he U.S. engineered a 'color revolution' in Kyrgyzstan in 2005 by financing a host of its NGOs there.... Kyrgyzstan closed the (Manas) base because of the disastrous U.S. policy in Central Asia, which created a situation in which it is now better not to be friends with Washington." (COMMENT: If this is what appears in public, it would be interesting to know what Moscow says behind closed doors to Central Asian officials like Foreign Minister Tazhin. END COMMENT.)

¶7. (C) COMMENT: Kurmanguzhin said he was previously a special assistant to former Deputy Foreign Minister (now

Presidential Foreign Policy Adviser) Khairat Sarybay, when Sarybay was responsible in the MFA for Europe and the Americas. He said that he and Sarybay were the two principal drafters of Kazakhstan's "Path to Europe" policy, and added, with evident pride, President Nazarbayev had just given him a high award for the achievement. German Ambassador Reiner Schlageter told the Ambassador Kurmanguzhin is a "pro-Western intellectual voice in Kazakhstan's foreign-policy establishment. He seldom emerges above the radar, but when he does it's for a specific purpose." We do not know if Kurmanguzhin acted independently or was told to communicate to us Kazakhstan's difficult position vis-a-vis Russia. If Kurmanguzhin's message was accurate, Astana wants to find ways to be helpful in Afghanistan even while fending off Moscow's alleged demands not to help the United States. END COMMENT.  
HOAGLAND